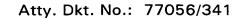
Atty. Dkt. No.: 77056/341

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1. A method of relieving stress in a fabric, comprising the steps of:
- 2 providing a fabric having at least three layers;
- feeding the fabric along a pathway;
- applying a tension to the fabric in a direction substantially
- 5 perpendicular to the pathway;
- 6 heating the fabric; and
- removing the tension from the fabric in the direction substantially
- 8 perpendicular to the pathway.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein a tentering frame is used for
- 2 applying tension to the fabric in the direction substantially perpendicular
- 3 to the pathway.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the steps of:
- before heating, applying a tension to the fabric in a direction
- 3 substantially parallel to the pathway; and
- 4 after heating, removing the tension from the fabric in the direction
- substantially perpendicular to the pathway.
- 1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the fabric comprises a window
- 2 covering including first and second sheets of material coupled to each
- 3 other by a plurality of vanes.

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- 1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein each side of the tentering frame
- 2 contacts the respective substantially opposite edges of the first and
- 3 second sheets of sheer material.
- 1 6. The method of claim 3, wherein a nip system is used for applying
- the tension to the window covering in the direction substantially parallel
- 3 to the pathway.
- 1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the nip system includes a plurality
- of nips along the pathway for contacting the window covering.
- 1 8. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of carrying the
- window covering along the pathway with a drive belt assembly.
- 1 9. A system for relieving stress in a three-dimensional window
- 2 covering, comprising:
- a tentering frame for applying tension to a three-dimensional
- 4 window covering in a first direction; and
- a plurality of heating elements located along the tentering frame for
- 6 heating the window covering,
- 7 wherein the tentering frame carries the window covering while
- 8 under tension in the first direction along a pathway adjacent to the
- 9 heating elements.
- 10. The system of claim 9, further comprising a plurality of nip units
- along the pathway for applying tension to the window covering in a
- 3 second direction.



- 1 11. The system of claim 10, wherein the heating elements comprise a
- 2 first plurality of heating elements on a first side of the pathway and
- 3 second plurality of heating elements on a second side of the pathway
- 4 substantially opposite the first side of the pathway.
- 1 12. The system of claim 11, wherein the first and second pluralities of
- 2 heating elements each comprise three heating elements.
- 1 13. The system of claim 11, wherein the window covering comprises a
- 2 first sheer material and a second sheer material coupled to each other by
- at least one vane, the first and second sheer materials having first and
- 4 second edges located substantially parallel to the pathway, and wherein
- the tentering frame applies tension to the window covering in the first
- 6 direction by contacting the first edge of the first sheer material and the
- 7 second edge of the second sheer material.
- 1 14. The system of claim 11, further comprising a platen located
- between the first and second pluralities of heating elements, wherein the
- 3 window covering contacts the platen as the window covering is carried
- 4 by the tentering frame.
- 1 15. The system of claim 9, further comprising a conveyor belt along the
- 2 pathway adjacent to the heating elements for carrying the window
- 3 covering across the platen.

- 16. A method of relieving stress in a three-dimensional fabric,
- comprising the steps of: 2
- providing a three-dimensional fabric comprises\multiple materials; 3
- feeding the fabric along a pathway; 4
- tensioning the fabric in a first direction; 5
- applying heat to the fabric as the fabric travels along the pathway; 6
- and 7
- removing the tension from the fabric in the first direction. 8
- 17. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of: 1
- tensioning the fabric in a second direction substantially 2
- perpendicular to the first direction; and 3
- removing the tension from the fabric in the second direction. 4
- 18. The method of claim 16, wherein a tentering frame along the 1
- pathway is used for tensioning the fabric in the first direction. 2
- 19. The method of claim 17, wherein a plurality of nip units along the 1
- pathway are used for tensioning the fabric in the second direction. 2
- 20. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of carrying the 1
- fabric via a conveyor belt along at least a portion of the pathway. 2